

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims without prejudice, as follows:

Claims 1-58. CANCELED

Claim 59. (Previously Presented) A method of fluid distribution in a chemical reactor comprising the steps of:

providing a layer of a plurality of ceramic filter units, at least some of the ceramic filter units including a body having a substantially annular outer peripheral shape, a central opening extending through the body, and at least three elliptical openings extending through the body and positioned between the central opening and an outer periphery of the body so that a combination of the central opening and the at least three elliptical openings define a plurality of fluid flow passageways extending through the at least some of the plurality of ceramic filter units;

contacting an organic-based feed stream with the layer of the plurality of ceramic filter units; and

subdividing the organic-based feed stream into a plurality of smaller fluid streams by passing the organic-based feed stream through the plurality of fluid flow passageways prior to the organic-based feed stream contacting a catalyst bed in the chemical reactor.

Claim 60. CANCELED

Claim 61. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 59, further including the steps of: removing contaminants from a contaminated organic-based feed stream; and providing a decontaminated and uniformly spread organic-based feed stream to a catalyst bed for further processing in the chemical reactor.

Claim 62. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 59, including the step of packing the ceramic filter units into the chemical reactor with a packing factor of about 200 to 500 ft²/ft³.

Claim 63. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 59, including the step of packing the ceramic filter units in graduated layers into the chemical reactor with each layer having a different packing factor of about 200 to 500 ft²/ft³.

Claim 64. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 59, wherein the body of at least one of the plurality of ceramic filter units has a fluted outer peripheral surface.

Claim 65. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 59, wherein the outer peripheral includes a plurality of recessed notches extending inwardly from the outer periphery towards the medial portion of the ceramic filter unit.

Claim 66. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 59, wherein the at least three elliptical openings substantially surround the central opening between the central opening and the outer periphery to thereby define a ring around the central opening.

Claim 67. (Previously Presented) A method of fluid distribution in a chemical reactor comprising the steps of:

providing a layer of a plurality of ceramic filter units, at least some of the ceramic filter units including a body having a substantially polygonal outer peripheral shape, a central opening extending through the body, and at least three elliptical openings extending through the body and positioned between the central opening and an outer periphery of the body so that a combination of the central opening and the at least three

elliptical openings define a plurality of fluid flow passageways extending through the at least some of the plurality of ceramic filter units;

contacting an organic-based feed stream with the layer of the plurality of ceramic filter units; and

subdividing the organic-based feed stream into a plurality of smaller fluid streams by passing the organic-based feed stream through at least some of the plurality of fluid flow passageways prior to the organic-based feed stream contacting a catalyst bed in the chemical reactor.

Claim 68. CANCELED

Claim 69. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, further including the steps of: removing contaminants from a contaminated organic-based feed stream; and providing a decontaminated and uniformly spread organic-based feed stream to a catalyst bed for further processing in the chemical reactor.

Claim 70. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the outer peripheral includes a plurality of notches recessed from the outer peripheral towards the medial portion of the ceramic filter unit.

Claim 71. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, including a step of utilizing ceramic filter units wherein the outer periphery has a polygonal shape with a length of about 1/8 inches to about 3 inches.

Claim 72. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the body of at least one of the plurality of ceramic filter units has a substantially polygonal shape selected from the group consisting of triangles, quadrilaterals, squares, rectangles, pentagons, hexagons, heptagons, and octagons.

Claim 73. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the body of at least one of the plurality of ceramic filter units has a square shape with a width of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inches to about 3 inches.

Claim 74. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the body of at least one of the plurality of ceramic filter units has a rectangular shape with a length of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inches to about 3 inches and a width of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inches to about 3 inches.

Claim 75. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the body of at least one of the plurality of ceramic filter units has a closed-planed shape with a width of about $\frac{1}{4}$ inches to about 3 inches.

Claim 76. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the outer peripheral includes a plurality of recessed notches extending inwardly from the outer periphery towards the medial portion of the ceramic filter unit.

Claim 77. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in claim 67, wherein the at least three elliptical openings substantially surround the central opening between the central opening and the outer periphery to thereby define a ring around the central opening.

Claim 78. (Previously Presented) A method of fluid distribution in a chemical reactor comprising the steps of:

providing a layer of a plurality of ceramic filter units, at least some of the ceramic filter units including a body, a central opening extending through the body, and at least three elliptical openings also extending through the body and positioned between the central opening and an outer periphery of the body so that a combination of the central opening and the at least three elliptical openings define a plurality of fluid flow passageways extending through each of the plurality of ceramic filter units;

contacting an organic-based feed stream with the layer of the plurality of ceramic filter units; and

subdividing the organic-based feed stream into a plurality of smaller fluid streams by passing the organic-based feed stream through the at least some of the plurality of fluid flow passageways prior to the organic-based feed stream contacting a catalyst bed in the chemical reactor.

Claim 79. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in Claim 59, wherein the central opening is circular.

Claim 80. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in Claim 67, wherein the central opening is circular.

Claim 81. (Previously Presented) A method as defined in Claim 78, wherein the central opening is circular.

Claim 82. (New) A method as defined in Claim 64, wherein the fluted outer peripheral surface of the at least one of the plurality of ceramic filter units has sharp edges.